

## Archaeological Investigations and Historic Resource Evaluation Putnam Memorial State Park Redding, Connecticut

AHS staff conducted a cultural resource study of proposed improvements to the main entrance of Putnam Memorial State Park. The improvements included reconstruction of the intersection of two state roads to improve traffic safety, reconfiguration of park grounds to increase parking capacity and public accessibility, and restoration of an 1893 pavilion building. Putnam Memorial State Park was created in 1887 in order to preserve the grounds and remnants of the winter encampment of a brigade of the Continental Army from November 1778 to April 1779. Above-ground remains of camp huts and other structures are visible, and archaeological testing has identified subsurface components within the Park. The early period of the Park (1887 to ca. 1925) saw the construction of the monument, road system, keeper's house, museum, pavilion, block houses at Park entrances and other features designed to memorialize the Revolutionary War encampment. These early Park features now have historical significance of their own. The entire Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970, but the nomination was limited to the Park's historic encampment; it did not include archaeological components or Park-period elements. On January 1, 2001, the Park was designated as Connecticut's first State Archaeological Preserve.

Because of the Park's historic and archaeological sensitivity, at the request of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, AHS staff completed a Phase I Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey of all areas subject to project effects. The survey identified numerous potentially significant archaeological resources, including remnants of a small prehistoric camp located roughly 75 feet north of the main Park entrance; a Revolutionary War-period component comprised of grapeshot recovered just southwest of the reconstructed guard house; a possible hearth feature north of the pavilion; and evidence of a buried road bed and possible stone bridge remains. Phase II Intensive Archaeological Survey of these resources was then completed by AHS staff to ascertain their integrity and National Register eligibility.

It was determined that the Park, particularly the entrance, appears to meet National Register Criteria Consideration F, achieving historical significance for the early Park-period structures and landscape features that commemorate the Revolutionary War period encampment. Historically appropriate restoration of the pavilion was therefore advised, and it was recommended that the guardhouse remain in its current location. Perhaps most important, we recommended adherence to the original intent of the Park founders to maintain the rustic nature of the main entrance as a quiet window to the past, unobstructed by modern elements.

